Justice
August 6, 2008

Policies Amended to Better Serve Youth in Custody

Recognizing special consideration must be allowed for young persons in custody, the Honourable Jerome Kennedy, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, today announced new policies for the use of the St. John's Youth Detention Centre.

While the St. John's Youth Detention Centre located on Parade Street is not intended to be a long-term holding facility, effectively immediately, youth arrested by police after 8:00 p.m. will be held at the facility until a court appearance the following morning. In the event a young person is detained overnight, a youth care counsellor must be present. As well, the facility will continue to be used for matters such as the pre-trial services program, professional counselling and family visits.

"The care of young persons in custody is our priority and allowances must be made for circumstances when youth have been arrested in the evening," said Minister Kennedy. "The Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Centre is the youth custody facility for the province, it is best equipped to deal with the needs of young people and must be the primary facility for those in our custody. However, it is not in the best interest of young people to be transported to Whitbourne late in the evening only to return to St. John's the following morning for a court appearance."

Historically during court sitting days, young persons have been detained in the Atlantic Place holding cells during lunch breaks or delays. Effective immediately, young people will be transported to the St. John's Youth Detention Centre by sheriff's officers for lunch breaks or any delay expected to last beyond one hour as this is a more appropriate holding facility for youth. Sheriff's officers will also conduct transports from the Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Centre to St. John's each day.

Both the Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Centre and Provincial Court have video-conferencing capabilities which should be used more frequently to decrease conveyances.

"It is critical that the Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Centre and Provincial Court increase the usage of video-conferencing for court appearances," said Minister Kennedy. "By using video-conferencing the need to convey young people to St. John's will be decreased. This effort will take co-operation and I ask for all parties involved to help make the justice system more considerate of the needs of our young people."

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